

ON PAGE

A3

NEW YORK TIMES
15 March 1987

U.S. Clash Looms on Aid to Pakistan

By ELAINE SCIOLINO

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, March 14 — The Reagan Administration and Congress are poised for a fight over aid to Pakistan because of its work on developing a nuclear bomb, Administration and Congressional sources said today.

The battle lines are being drawn following the Administration's formal request last week to give Pakistan a six-year exemption from a provision that bans American aid to any country that does not allow international inspection of its nuclear installations. The provision also requires the President to certify that he has received "reliable assurances that the country in question will not acquire or develop nuclear weapons."

The subject is particularly sensitive because negotiations between Pakistan and Afghanistan on a solution for the Afghan war are at a delicate point. In the recent round of United Nations-sponsored talks in Geneva, the two sides moved closer on a timetable for a withdrawal of the 115,000 Soviet troops, with the Soviet-backed Afghan Government offering a faster withdrawal, to be completed within 18 months, and Pakistan offering to accept a withdrawal over six or seven months instead of four, according to sources familiar with the talks.

Aid Cutoff Had No Effect

There is also a fear in Washington that because of increasing public pressure in Pakistan to help end the Afghan war, Pakistan might tire of its commitment to aiding the Islamic guerrillas and move to make peace with Moscow.

Aid to Pakistan was cut off by the Carter Administration in 1979 because of Pakistan's refusal to permit interna-

tional inspection of its nuclear installations. The American offer to send small amounts of aid after Soviet troops moved into Afghanistan in December of that year was rejected by Pakistan's President, Mohammed Zia ul-Haq, as "peanuts." Aid resumed when President Reagan in 1981 waived the American law barring such aid.

Because Administration officials and independent nuclear experts believe that Pakistan manufactured weapons-grade uranium for the first time last year, this year's aid request forces the Administration and Congress to choose between American policy against the spread of nuclear weapons and the most popular aspect of the Reagan doctrine — support for the anti-Communist Afghan rebels, in which Pakistani cooperation is crucial.

The request to renew the waiver is contained in the draft foreign aid bill presented to Congress for the fiscal year 1988, which asks for \$4 billion in economic and military aid for Pakistan over the next six years. A State Department analysis of the bill states that it is "in the national interests of the United States to continue assistance to Pakistan, now confronted with Soviet military pressures."

Nowhere does the analysis mention the problem of Pakistan's nuclear ability.

Tired of Lies, Senator Says

In testimony before the House Foreign Affairs subcommittee on Asia last week, Leonard S. Spector, a nuclear proliferation expert at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, said that in six years, "Pakistan could possess a de facto nuclear arsenal of nearly 20 devices."

Senator Alan Cranston, Democrat of California and a frequent critic of Pakistan, is planning to introduce legislation in the Senate this month that would call for a 50 percent cut in military assistance to Pakistan and limit waiving assurances against building nuclear weapons to two years. A parallel amendment is expected to be introduced in the House.

"Quite frankly, we're tired of the Pakistani leadership looking us in the eye and lying to us repeatedly," Mr. Cranston said.

Pakistan has consistently denied

that its nuclear program is designed for military purposes. But Administration intelligence analysts say they believe that Pakistan now has virtually the same ability as Israel to assemble a nuclear device within weeks.

These analysts say the remarks recently attributed to the head of Pakistan's nuclear research program, Abdul Qadeer Khan, asserting that Pakistan already had developed a nuclear device, conform to what they believe is true. Mr. Khan later denied making the remarks.

The analysts also note that last year a number of Administration officials asserted to Congress that Pakistan was not on the brink of developing a nuclear weapon; this year, no one is saying that is the case.

Indeed, in testimony before the House Foreign Affairs subcommittee on Asia last week, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Robert Peck acknowledged that the United States could no longer obtain "reliable assurances" from Pakistan that it has stopped producing nuclear explosive materials.

But many members of Congress say they are reluctant to punish the Pakistanis too harshly because of their unwavering cooperation in funneling American aid to guerrillas in Afghanistan and their acceptance of three million Afghan refugees.

Few in Congress support a proposal by Senator John Glenn, an Ohio Democrat and a leading opponent of the spread of nuclear weapons, that would suspend all military aid to Pakistan unless it offered convincing proof that it was not seeking to make nuclear weapons.

They also fear that such a suspension would provoke Pakistan to test a nuclear device. "Pakistan would test a nuclear device, which would lead to India testing an even larger nuclear device, which would lead to an overt nuclear arms race on the subcontinent," said Stephen J. Solarz, Democrat of Brooklyn and chairman of the House Foreign Affairs subcommittee on Asia.

Administration officials insist that they will press for a six-year commitment. "We're standing firm on the six-year waiver," said one official. "There's going to be a struggle."